

Marginal rise in British output of chemicals

Confirmation of the sharp reversal of growth trends in the United Kingdom chemical industry was provided yesterday in official Government statistics published by the Department of Trade and Industry.

According to the DTI, provisional indications are that output between the second and third quarters of this year increased by less than 1 per cent. The rate of growth in output since the third quarter of last year was less than 0.5 per cent, in marked contrast to previous growth rates.

The DTI suggests, however, that the industry's experience may be attributable to a change in the pattern of demand in the economy, certainly it is not attributable to exports which have been particularly buoyant.

Output of organic chemicals (which fell by 3.5 per cent in the second quarter) over the first half of the year was only slightly higher than in the corresponding period of last year. Production of inorganic chemicals, synthetic resins and plastics materials showed little change, but significant increases were recorded for pharmaceutical products, formulated pesticides and photographic chemical materials.

The largest fall in output in any one sector occurred in synthetic rubber. During the second quarter production was nearly 20 per cent lower than a year earlier.

As a result of this fall, output over the first half of the year was 14 per cent less than a year earlier.

Imports in the third quarter were only 4.5 per cent higher than in the same period last year. Exports in the third quarter were 22 per cent higher than a year earlier and over the first nine months amounted to an increase of 14.5 per cent.

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